



Commentary from
Congressman Joe Pitts
Sixteenth Congressional District of Pennsylvania

204 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
Contact: Gabe Neville, Press Secretary: 202 225-2411 www.house.gov/pitts

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The War is not Over

By Congressman Joe Pitts

The shock of September 11, 2001 is well past. That horrible event is, for most of us, not yet history but already a memory. Its consequences, however, are still before us. America has responded effectively and forcefully, and so far with great success. But to think that our response to September 11 is over, as the event itself is, would be a grave mistake.

The President knows this. Nine days after the attacks, he addressed a joint session of Congress. He said, "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated." That goal has not been reached.

The Taliban have been defeated and ousted from power in Afghanistan. Ridding that suffering country of its oppressive rulers was a crucial first step in the war on al Qaeda. But defeating the Taliban is not the same thing as defeating al Qaeda, just as defeating al Qaeda is not the same thing as defeating terrorism. Territory and infrastructure mean very little to a terrorist organization's ability to go on. Osama bin Laden remains at large, and so do many of his associates.

Locating and apprehending bin Laden is a national priority. He is on the FBI's list of ten most wanted fugitives and on its list of most wanted terrorists. We may not find him quickly or easily, but we must and will find him.

Defeating al Qaeda will involve more than capturing its leader. We must also continue to find and capture its other leaders. We must continue tracking down its financial assets and freezing them.

And we must remember that the Taliban were not the only regime willing or even eager to harbor and support terrorists. The State Department keeps a list of nations that sponsor terrorism. On it are Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, and Sudan. Other nations that are likely safe havens for terrorists include Somalia and Mauritania. Until these nations are taken to task and forced to stop harboring or supporting terrorism, our war on terrorism will not be over.

This is the essence of America's counterterrorism policy: first, make no concessions to terrorists and strike no deals; second, bring terrorists to justice for their crimes; third, isolate

and apply pressure on states that sponsor terrorism to force them to change their behavior; and fourth, bolster the counterterrorism capabilities of those countries that work with the U.S. and require assistance.

America has two options when it comes to fighting terrorism: offense and defense. Defense means waiting to be attacked and then responding. That is the wrong approach. President Bush has taken the fight to the terrorists and we must keep it there. If we do that, if we keep the terrorists running and make it abundantly clear that no person, organization, or nation is safe if they participate in terrorism—only then will terrorism lose its bite.

Last May, a federal jury in New York returned a guilty verdict against four men accused of plotting the bombings at our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Daniel Pipes and Steven Emerson warned in the *Wall Street Journal* against celebrating: “Unfortunately, the trial does almost nothing to enhance the safety of Americans. The Qaeda group, headed by the notorious Osama bin Laden, which perpetrated the outrages in East Africa, will barely notice the loss.... Indeed, recent information shows that Al Qaeda is not only planning new attacks on the U.S. but is also expanding its operational range to countries such as Jordan and Israel.”

Four short months later more than 3,000 Americans died in the worst terrorist attack in history.

It is normal to seek closure after a tragedy. This is as true for nations as it is for individuals. It would be a mistake to see the defeat of the Taliban as terrorism’s Waterloo. The war on terrorism is not over. It will not be for some time.

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